
Regional Council Activity Report

February 8, 2001

Briefing to Member Agencies from Executive Director James M. Bourey



Executive Director's Report

When Wilbur Smith and his associates sat down to create a major transportation plan for the Valley in 1960, they had to try to anticipate demands on a system that was not yet built decades into the future. Forty years later, we know that Mr. Smith and friends did a pretty good job of laying out a regional freeway system that serves the Valley well and for which completion is in sight. Sure, there were a few things they didn't anticipate, such as the impact of women in the workforce and the travel demands that trend would create. Still, when you consider all that they got right, it's clear that the visionary thinking of these planners was remarkable.

Now it's our turn to create a new transportation policy framework that forty years from now will be evaluated by our successors — some of whom may not even be born yet! It's an awesome responsibility we share as we work to envision what demands there will be on our transportation system decades into the future.

As we embark on one of the most significant planning efforts MAG has undertaken, we, like Wilbur Smith, will work to analyze current trends, identify projected changes in those trends, and determine their anticipated impact in the years ahead. We will use these analyses to identify future transportation needs, and we will develop a solid policy foundation for transportation infrastructure decisions that will direct investments in the region over the next 20 to 40 years. A key component of the new Regional Transportation Plan will be to establish performance criteria by which transportation investments can be measured. This will make it easier to identify those projects which will provide the most benefit to mobility in the region.

To launch this major planning process, MAG is hosting a kickoff dinner on February 22, 2001, from 5:30 - 9:00 p.m. at the Phoenix Airport Marriott hotel in Phoenix. The keynote speaker for the event will be Anthony Downs, senior fellow of the Brookings Institute and a nationally-recognized author and

expert on urban policy, metropolitan planning, urban sprawl and demographics. I hope many of you will join us to jumpstart this important dialogue. Seating is limited, so reservations are required. Please call 602-254-6300 for more information.

In the weeks following the dinner, we have scheduled five half-day Expert Panel Forums to begin our examination of the issues facing the region in the years ahead. The forums will be led by national and local experts and will focus on five key areas (listed below). All forums will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Arizona Historical Society in Tempe, 1300 North College Avenue, on the dates indicated:

- Demographics and Social Change – Friday, February 23, 2001
- New Economy – Friday, March 2, 2001
- Environmental and Resource Issues – March 9, 2001
- Land Use and Development – March 23, 2001
- Transportation Technology/Modes of Travel – March 30, 2001

Tapping into some of the best minds in the country, the forums are expected to generate a series of white papers on the key challenges identified in each of the five areas, and their potential impact on transportation planning, policy, funding and demand. Again, anyone interested in attending these free discussions is welcome, but we ask that you RSVP to the same number above to reserve a seat.

MAG will work closely with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) throughout the process. Other partners include the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, East Valley Chambers of Commerce Alliance, and WESTMARC (Western Maricopa Coalition).

We hope you will join us in our dialogue — and our excitement — as the region crafts its own transportation legacy.



Regional Council Meeting Report for January 24, 2001

Loop 303 Alignment Identified

The MAG Regional Council voted to adopt an alignment along Lone Mountain Road as the preferred option for connecting Loop 303 to Interstate 17. The Lone Mountain option was one of four alignment alternatives that had been identified for study, along with Dixileta Drive, Carefree Highway, and New River Road.

Over 37 miles in length, the Loop 303 extends around the west side of the Phoenix metropolitan area from just south of Interstate 10 to Interstate 17. The section between Lake Pleasant Road and I-17 is the only section of the loop that has not been formally identified.

Regional Council representatives said they chose the Lone Mountain alignment for several reasons, including the fact that the corridor goes through an undeveloped area, creating fewer disruptions to property owners, and because it provides the best opportunity for a through east-west traffic movement to I-17 on Lone Mountain Road. The alignment additionally met the evaluation criteria in terms of serving the mobility needs of the northwest Valley, being compatible with the general plans for the area, and for having no apparent fatal environmental flaws.

In addition to adopting the Lone Mountain alignment as the preferred option for the Loop 303 connection, members of the MAG Regional Council designated the New River Road alignment for further study in the MAG regional transportation plan.

For more information contact Eric Anderson, MAG Transportation Manager, at (602) 254-6300.

Park-and-Ride Lots Sited

The MAG Regional Council has approved a study recommending locations for twenty new park-and-ride lots along the Valley's regional freeway system. The study includes recommendations for funding construction of the first ten lots within the next five years. Individual cities are expected to support essential transit service to the lots, and provide for operations and maintenance.

Valley residents helped in the siting of the lots by providing input during several forums and a combined agency public meeting in December. Park-

and-ride lots help promote ridesharing and reduce dependence on single occupant vehicles by providing a convenient place for motorists to park and join others to carpool, vanpool, or access express bus services.

For more information contact Chris Voigt, MAG Senior Engineer, at (602) 254-6300.

Projects Approved for Air Quality Funds

The MAG Regional Council has approved a list of 41 projects to receive federal funding in FY 2006 as a means of reducing Valley air pollution. About \$35 million in uncommitted Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds were available for projects such as streets, transit, bicycle, pedestrian and telecommunication projects.

MAG received 88 requests for CMAQ-eligible projects totaling \$178 million. The projects were evaluated based on emission reduction scores and prioritized. Of the 41 projects approved for funding, eight were for bicycle facilities, nine were for Intelligent Transportation Systems, six were for pedestrian projects, seven were for street projects, one was for a regionwide telecommunications project, five were for transit and five for overall air quality (transportation demand management) programs.

In addition to the CMAQ projects, the Regional Council additionally approved the ADOT cooperatively developed FY 2002-2006 Highway Construction Program.

For more information contact Paul Ward, MAG Freeway Programming Manager, at (602) 254-6300.

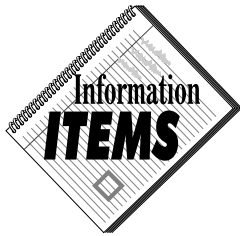


Upcoming Issues

EPA Wants Nonattainment Boundary Expanded

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has sent a notice to Governor Jane Hull recommending that the nonattainment area boundaries for the 8-hour ozone standard include all of Pinal County and Maricopa County. MAG staff reports that this expanded area could lead to challenges in our air quality program. The governor does have the ability to recommend a smaller nonattainment area. MAG is working with the Governor's Office and the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality on this critical issue.

For more information contact Lindy Bauer, MAG Environmental Manager, at (602) 254-6300.



Information Items

Homeless Planning Efforts Celebrated

Homeless services providers, elected officials and other advocates were on hand to help kick off the 2001 planning cycle for homeless issues in the Maricopa Region, during a luncheon January 25, 2001. The luncheon was held in part to celebrate the efforts of homeless planning in the region last year, when MAG created a year-round planning body dedicated to addressing homelessness in Maricopa County. Last year's unified regional effort resulted in the highest funding ever awarded in homeless housing and services projects – a record \$18.6 million in Homeless Continuum of Care funding awards from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

HUD funds from the Continuum of Care grant are used in the Maricopa Region for transitional and permanent housing and services for children, families, veterans, victims of domestic violence, those with mental health and substance abuse problems, and people with HIV/AIDS.

For more information contact Carol Kratz, MAG Human Services Manager, at (602) 254-6300.

Pedestrian Projects Receive Design Assistance

Three projects have been selected to receive pedestrian design assistance. The projects include a City of Glendale Project called "Creating a More Walkable City One Mile at a Time" (\$50,000); City of Avondale Western Avenue Pedestrian Friendly Design Project (\$30,000); and the City of Phoenix South Mountain to River Multi-Use Trail System (\$50,000). Because the projects were estimated to cost more than the \$125,000 in available assistance, the Regional Council approved a recommendation to use \$5,000 of Surface Transportation Program funds to allow for the funding of the Phoenix project.

For more information, contact Dawn Coomer, MAG Transportation Planner, (602) 254-6300.



Upcoming Events

MAG Goes to the Mall for Input

The months of February and March will offer three significant opportunities for Valley residents to tell planners what they think about state and regional transportation plans.

The first opportunity will come during a “MAG at the Mall” event held the weekend of February 10 - 11, beginning at noon, at Metrocenter, 9617 N. Metro Parkway West, Phoenix. MAG will host a booth in the mall that includes a game called “Are You a MAG Mastermind?” – in which participants spin a wheel and answer questions about the MAG region to win prizes. MAG will distribute “visual preference” surveys to those who visit the booth. The survey will ask respondents to identify transportation issues most important to their quality of life.

The second opportunity will come at a Transportation Fair on Tuesday, February 20, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Central Station Transit Center, located on the northeast corner of 1st Avenue and Van Buren. Representatives from MAG, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), and the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) will be on hand to disseminate information and answer questions about short- and long-range transportation plans.

The third opportunity will be an Open House and Public Hearing scheduled for March 1. The Open House will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., with the Public Hearing to follow from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. Both the Open House and Public Hearing will be held at the MAG offices, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Second Floor, Phoenix.

For more information contact Jason Stephens, MAG Public Involvement Planner, (602) 254-6300.

Next Regional Council Meeting

The next Regional Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 28, 2001 at 5:00 p.m. at the MAG offices, 302 N. 1st Ave., Suite 200. Agenda items are expected to include a MAG Intelligent Transportation Systems Strategic Plan Update, recommended participation in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Road Cuts Study, recommendations for the MAG Regional Off-Street System Plan, a video presentation on High Occupancy Toll lanes, and an update on Maricopa County dust control efforts.

For more information contact Dennis Smith, MAG Assistant Director, (602) 254-6300.